

Congressman French Hill (AR-02)  
House Committee on Education and Labor  
Written Remarks for Member Day Hearing  
Date: Thursday, April 22, 2021

Chairwoman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx and Members of the Committee, thank you for convening this important Member Day Hearing to allow Members of Congress to outline their education and labor priorities.

I was first elected in 2014 and am pleased to be entering my fourth term in Congress. Since being elected, I have been privileged to serve on the bicameral and bipartisan HBCU Caucus. I am now delighted to be a co-chair for the HBCU Caucus. Education equality is a value that I share with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. HBCUs are an essential part of our higher educational system and I will continue to work to advocate for them and bolster all 107 HBCU schools. My work with the HBCUs in my district and the HBCU Caucus is greatly beneficial to important current work you are doing on the House Education and Labor Committee. As I have continued to work with the HBCU Caucus, I have learned much from my fellow Members on the Committee on both sides of the aisle.

Reflecting on the past six years, I wanted to take the opportunity today to outline my current legislative priorities for the Committee.

I've broken my priorities into two initiatives:

**1) Pass the Shift Back to Society Act**

This Congress, I will reintroduce my legislation from the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress – the Shift Back to Society Act. I hope to receive bipartisan support again for this important legislation so it can pass Congress and help reduce recidivism.

The legislation that I will reintroduce creates a pilot program that directs the Department of Justice to create and award matching grants to historically black colleges and universities to provide educational programs for eligible offenders to facilitate re-entry into the community. The legislation defined and eligible offender as someone who is a convicted criminal offender who has been released from incarceration for not longer than one year or who is scheduled to be released from incarceration within one year.

**2) Prioritize Policy Initiatives to Enhance HBCUs**

It is not controversial to state that education inequality is a civil rights fight and that Congress plays a role in winning that long-term goal. All students in the American family must be able to receive a quality education. This is especially important for America's college students. HBCUs offer essential tools that help students pursue their own American Dream. I invite the committee to learn and seek to address the unique challenges that HBCUs face and expand opportunity for all students on their campuses.

As the Committee moves further into this Congress, I invite all committee members to work on creating meaningful legislation that will support students and graduates of HBCUs by increasing access to career opportunities.

Whenever possible, please seek to prioritize our HBCU schools and students. When HBCU schools and students do well – all of America does well.

I would like to thank the Committee for holding this important hearing and look forward to working with Committee Members to advance these important initiatives.